
Critical Issues in Police Officer Profession

There are many critical issues facing law enforcement when it comes to policing. Many people think the only real danger police officers have to worry about is being shot on duty, but there are numerous dangers in regards to policing. Police officers often have to use force to incapacitate a suspect but instead of getting in to a physical altercation or resorting to lethal force, they have the option of using less-than-lethal force. Police also have a wide variety of technology at their disposal to help them accomplish their job and keep them safe.

Being a police officer is a dangerous job. Many people may think they just have to worry about being shot on the job, but that is not the only danger they face. Officers in pursuit whether it is on foot or by vehicle can be dangerous for the officer and the public. Police officers have to be exceptionally careful when pursuing a suspect so they do not cause harm to an innocent civilian. Routine traffic stops are also hazardous to police officers because they never know how the individual will react to being stopped by police. Prolonged exposure to the sun is a danger many do not think of in regards to police officers. Because they can be exposed to the sun and heat for hours, heat stroke can be very dangerous for a police officer. If a police department is not up to date on equipment or using damaged equipment, police officers face many dangers from using said equipment. Equipment can malfunction or simply not work which can cause harm to the officer. Police officers equipment can also be heavy and having to carry too much weight on their bodies can cause problems with their neck, back, and feet. Stress from the job is one of the biggest dangers an officer faces. Stress can distract an officer on duty and cause him to make mistakes he normally would not, which can have tragic consequences. Stress does not only affect the police officer, but it can affect the police officers family and any civilians he comes in to contact with. Stress may cause a police officer to overreact or mishandle certain situations, which can lead an officer to use excessive force.

Less-than-lethal force can be defined as force that incapacitates an individual but does not kill or cause an individual lethal bodily harm. Weapons such as a stun gun and pepper spray are common amongst police officers, but less than lethal weapons such as an intense strobe light can be just as effective at disabling a suspect. One less than lethal weapon many individual forget about is the police canine. The canine is a trained asset many police departments can use to help track suspects or drugs. Canines can be considered less than lethal because they have commands they follow and are normally trained to subdue a suspect and not kill a suspect. Less than lethal weapons allow police officers to use force when a suspect is not cooperating and resisting arrest or when a suspect is attempting to attack the police officer without the worry of critically injuring or killing an individual. It is helpful to police so they do not have to get in to a physical altercation where an individual may be able to overpower the police officer and cause them harm. Less than lethal does not mean it cannot kill an individual, it just means it is less lethal than using lethal force such as a knife or gun. Under certain circumstances less-than-lethal weapons can cause lethal reactions such as individuals with heart problems being shocked by a stun gun.

Police departments and officers have a great amount of technology available to them to use for their daily tasks. One of the greatest tools available to police everywhere is the License Plate Reader. The license plate reader allows officers to identify stolen cars and illegally parked cars

(Katz & Walker, 2011). The license plate reader can supply information to an officer about the car and person driving it which is especially helpful for traffic stops. Computer aided dispatch is another tool that can help police officers accomplish their job efficiently. Instead of relying on the old style of radio dispatch, the computer aided dispatch will have the most relevant information needed and be sent instantly to the police officers mobile computer (Katz & Walker, 2011). By sending the information directly to an officer's computer they will be able to comprehend the information easily, unlike radio dispatch where words can be cut off or misunderstood. With every new generation of criminal, there becomes a need for a new type of technology for law enforcement to deal with them.

One issue of policing that needs to be addressed nationwide is how the cost of policing affects society's safety. Often police are laid off due to budget cuts which restricts a police department's ability to provide coverage to an entire city. Many police departments rely on older technology or no technology to help solve crimes because there is no money to buy what they need. While cities are spending more and more on police departments than in the past, it is because there is a need for new technology to catch criminals. Because crime and criminals are constantly evolving, the need for more police with better technology is needed. Every cities main priority should be civilian safety, regardless of the cost. While not ever city needs a massive amount of money to support the police force, the money for technology to catch criminals is still a need.

There are many critical issues facing law enforcement. Many people may think a police officer's only real danger is being shot on the job, but there are many dangers they face on a day to day basis. There are times police officers have to use force to subdue a suspect and in times where they do not feel lethal force is necessary they can use less-than-lethal force to incapacitate a suspect. Police officers have a wide variety of technology at their disposal so they can accomplish their job efficiently and keep them safe.